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U.S. SAID TO LIMIT INFORMATION FLOW TO ISRAEL AGENCIES

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 12 — A senior Defense Department official said today that the United States had reduced its sharing of intelligence information with Israel since Jonathan Jay Pollard, an American Navy analyst, was arrested Nov. 21 on charges of espionage.

The official, Richard L. Armitage, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, explained in an interview that a resumption of close intelligence relations would have to wait until the American team that is now in Israel has finished questioning Israeli officials involved in the case.

Israeli Pledge to Help

"In some areas there has been a slowdown in intelligence cooperation — not in vital areas," Mr. Armitage said in answer to a question. "And we're waiting the results of the Pollard fact-finding investigation." He said American officials assume that "full cooperation will be forthcoming" in accordance with a statement to that effect by Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

Mr. Peres has apologized to the United States, has portrayed the spy operation as independent of Israel's main intelligence agencies, and has pledged to help American investigators. This approach has drawn criticism from some Israelis who think it will undermine other espionage efforts, and the degree of Israeli cooperation has yet to become clear.

The Future of Relations

The team of American officials, led by Abraham D. Sofaer, the State Department legal adviser, was reported to have begun meetings today with officials in Israel who are said to have received stolen documents from Mr. Pollard.

The team is understood to be concentrating on two areas of inquiry: first, to determine whether this was an isolated case or part of a broader Israeli spy network in the United States, and second, to make what one official called "a damage assessment" that will detail what information Mr. Pollard's documents provided. The United States has asked for the return of all the documents, but it is not known whether Israel will comply.

Although Mr. Armitage stopped short of linking renewed American in-

telligence-sharing to Israeli cooperation in the Pollard case, the anger and resentment expressed in various Government agencies suggest to some officials that in the short term, at least, relations will depend on the information Israel gives to the American investigators.

Some of the reduction in intelligence-sharing has been a mutual and natural development, one American official explained, which resulted when Israeli officials refrained from their usual meetings and contacts with Americans because they were embarrassed by the Pollard affair.

Shortly after the arrest, for example, two Israeli generals — Ehud Barak, head of military intelligence, and Amos Lapidot, commander of the air force — reportedly canceled a scheduled visit to Washington. They are to make the trip at a later date, not yet set, an official said.

Other meetings at lower levels, both formal and informal, have been canceled or postponed, according to some of those involved. The easy, everyday conversations that intelligence people conduct with one another have been somewhat curtailed, officials say.

Some of the inhibitions may derive from a message being driven home in the Government that an official who conveys classified information to Israel without formal authorization is committing espionage, even if he does it without pay. "I think there is a deplorable amount of that," said one high-ranking official. "Any individual who sees Israeli and U.S. interests as parallel is dead wrong."

Thus far, such wrongdoing has not been prosecuted. In certain cases, according to several people who are current or former officials, the individuals have been subjected to quiet investigations and have been discreetly moved out of positions where they have access to information on the Middle East.

New, Tough Atmosphere

There is no hard indication that this approach will change after the Pollard case. But the case, combined with others — including the arrest of several people suspected of being Soviet agents and of a longtime Central Intelligence Agency employee who is accused of spying for China — has created a new atmosphere of toughness in the counterintelligence field that officials believe could throw a chill into some of the informal Israeli-American relationships.

The two countries share a broad range of information, especially on terrorism, electronics countermeasures and weapons systems. Mr. Armitage did not say which areas of cooperation had been damped since Mr. Pollard's arrest, nor would he specify the "vital areas" in which the close relationship continued. These were presumed to include alerts on possible terrorist attacks.

Israel has given the United States useful information as well, including details on the performance of Soviet weapons in Arab hands. But Israeli military intelligence officers have said that Washington also holds back data on military capabilities and deployments of pro-Western Arab armed forces, especially those of Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

An official who served in the National Security Council under President Carter said the United States has explicitly pledged not to convey such data to the Israelis. As Washington has kept its promise, Israel has pressed for a ground station with which it could receive aerial photographs directly from American spy satellites, without screening and delay by American officials. The United States has never agreed to such an arrangement.

Soviet Arms from Egypt

In addition, the former official said, while the United States got some captured Soviet weapons from Israel, "at a certain point we started getting much more from the Egyptians."

President Anwar el-Sadat of Egypt permitted the Americans to examine anything they wanted to, he said, on the condition that Egypt's specifications — electronics capabilities, radar frequencies and the like — would not be passed to the Israelis. Israeli officials have said Mr. Pollard's documents contained details on Soviet weapons.

Another official, describing himself as a supporter of close ties with Israel, expressed concern over the reaction that the Pollard case had provoked in official circles.

"Many Government officials feel that this Administration, more than any other, worked to develop relations with Israel," he said. "We worked so hard with them to put their economy back on track. There is a feeling that we've been had."